

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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VDH 06-41

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**VIRGINIA'S FIRST 2006 WEST NILE VIRUS ACTIVITY IDENTIFIED IN
FAIRFAX COUNTY MOSQUITOES**

(RICHMOND, Va.)—The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) announced today that a mosquito pool (group of mosquitoes) recently collected in Fairfax County tested positive for West Nile virus. This is the first indication of West Nile virus activity this year in Virginia.

“This positive test indicates we are experiencing a somewhat earlier onset of West Nile virus activity this year. A West Nile virus positive mosquito pool this early in the season may mean we can expect more virus activity this year,” said State Health Commissioner Robert B. Stroube, M.D., M.P.H. “This is a reminder of the importance of eliminating mosquito breeding areas around the home and protecting against mosquito-borne illnesses.”

Last year, Virginia's first West Nile virus activity was detected in mosquitoes in Henrico County in mid-July. There was one confirmed human case of West Nile virus in Virginia in 2005. A total of 16 birds, one horse and 319 mosquito pools tested positive for West Nile virus in Virginia last year. West Nile virus was first detected in Virginia in the fall of 2000.

West Nile virus is spread to birds, humans, horses and other mammals through the bite of an infected mosquito. Most people bitten by an infected mosquito do not get sick. People who do get sick usually suffer a mild flu-like illness. People over age 50 are at greatest risk of serious illness, such as encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) or meningitis (inflammation of the lining of the brain and spinal cord).

VDH recommends the following tips to reduce exposure to mosquitoes:

- Wear long, loose and light-colored clothing.
- Make sure window and door screens in your home are functional and in place.
- Use insect repellent products registered with the Environmental Protection Agency such as products containing DEET, Picaridin, or Oil of Lemon Eucalyptus. When using a product containing DEET, no more than 50 percent DEET should be used for adults and less than 30 percent should be used for children. Follow instructions when using insect repellents.
- Turn over, drain, or remove containers in your yard where water collects, such as old tires, potted plant trays, buckets and toys.

(more)

Page Two
West Nile Virus

- Fill in or drain root-ball holes (from downed trees) or any depression that holds water for more than a week.
- Eliminate standing water on tarps or flat roofs, and in boats.
- Clean out birdbaths and wading pools once a week.
- Clean roof gutters and downspout screens regularly.

For more information on West Nile virus, visit www.vdh.virginia.gov and click on “Mosquito-borne Diseases.”

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